

Overview of ASEAN-SAARC Cooperation

1. ASEAN and South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) convene their first Ministerial Meeting in New York on 25 September 1998, during which both sides agreed to hold annual ASEAN-SAARC meeting in New York at the margins of the UN General Assembly.
2. The ASEAN-SAARC Ministerial Meeting in September 2002 mandated the two Secretariats to intensify consultations. The Meeting also identified four key areas in which both sides could exchange information and best practices, namely FTA, HIV/AIDS, tourism and poverty alleviation. In pursuance to this, the Secretaries-General of ASEAN and SAARC met in August 2003 to explore possible collaborative activities. Both sides agreed to further elaborate possible cooperation activities between the Secretariats in a planning workshop. Subsequently, a three-day workshop was organized in January 2004 at the ASEAN Secretariat, resulting in the ASEAN-SAARC Secretariats' Work Plan (2004-2005), in which a total of 18 activities in nine areas were identified, and the Guidelines for ASEAN-SAARC Secretariat Partnership. In September 2005, ASEAN and SAARC conducted a mid-term review of the Work Plan in Kathmandu, Nepal. Based on the review, the Work Plan was revised to include two more areas for cooperation, namely disaster management and ICT.
3. The meeting between the ASEAN and SAARC officials in December 2007 reached a common understanding on the importance of keeping up cooperative activities manageable and feasible. The following areas were included in the ASEAN-SAARC Secretariats' Partnership Work Plan 2008 -2009: Trade and Investment, Energy, Health, Agriculture, Tourism, Drugs and Trans-national Crimes and Poverty Alleviation.
4. The SAARC Secretariat delegation, led by Secretary-General Ahmed Saleem, paid a working visit to the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta in February 2013. The two Secretariats discussed, among others, the possibility of renewing the ASEAN-SAARC Secretariats' Partnership Work Plan (2008-2009).
